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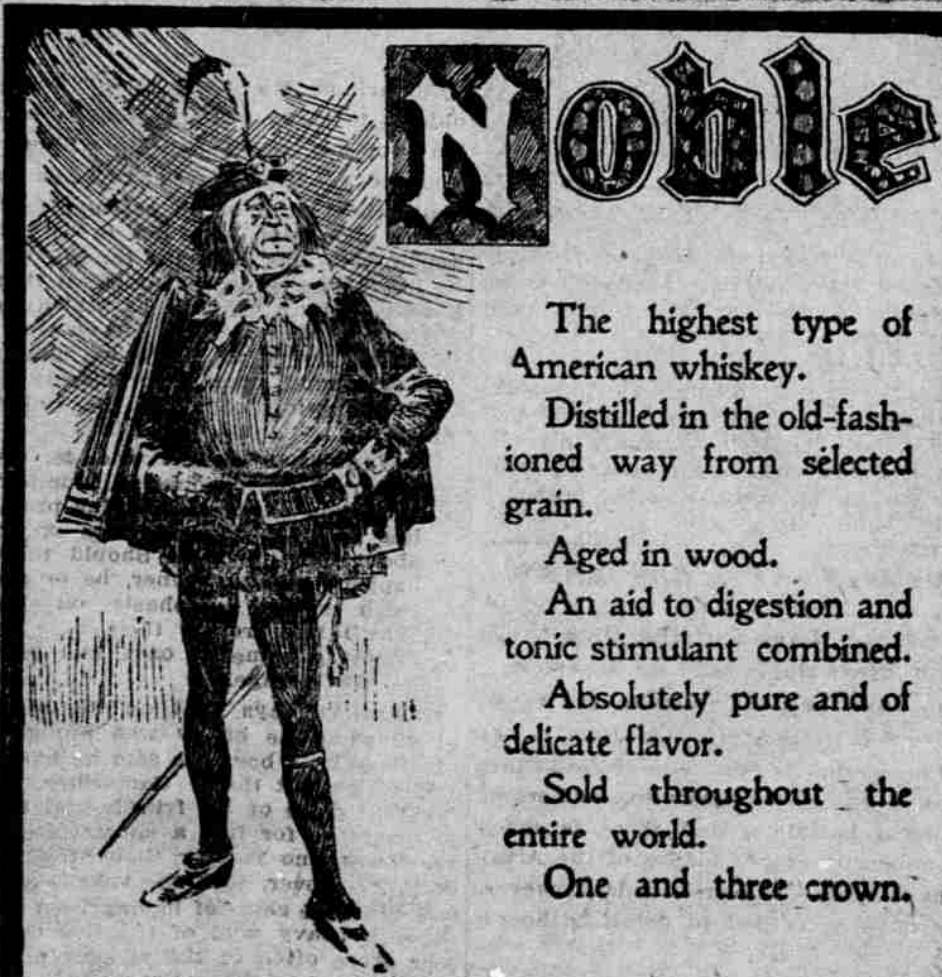
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**SAILOR RIOT  
IN OLD DAYS**

(Reminiscences of the late Marshal W. C. Parke.)

The whaling season of 1852 had been wonderfully successful, the fleet coming into Honolulu fairly loaded down with oil and bone; every barrel and container that could be used was full, the decks were even being used for storing bone. As the fleet at this time numbered some two hundred vessels, the harbor was completely filled with them, they being moored in two lines so close to each other that it was said one could walk from one vessel to the other all the way from the water front to the entrance of the harbor. Only a narrow passage-way was left between the two lines, to enable the vessels to put to sea. The crews numbered over three thousand men, composed of different nationalities, many of them being hard characters. When ashore in large bodies it was difficult to keep them in order, as the native police were not always to be depended on, and the number of resident foreigners subject to be called upon for assistance was not large.

Naturally, with so large a number of sailors in the town, there was more or less drunkenness, fast riding, and quarrels. It did not take much to cause a disturbance or riot, as there was a good deal of bad feeling between the sailors and police; and in such an event the former, as a matter of course, would all stand by one another. On the evening of the 8th of November, a sailor named Burns, of the ship Emerald, was arrested for drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and locked up in one of the cells in the Fort, in which there were already some eight or ten disturbers, as all the other lock-ups were full. During the night, Burns, who was crazy drunk, tore up the bricks in the floor of the cell, and threw them against the door. The jailor, George Sherman, who was just on the point of leaving the Fort, hearing this noise or "row," as he called it, went to the door and called out to Burns and the others to stop. As they paid no attention to him, he opened the door and stepped in. The cell was pitch dark, and fearing the men might set on him, he swung his club or cane from one side to the other; in doing so he struck Burns in the temple, the blow, together with his drunkenness, causing his death in three or four hours. I was not informed of this occurrence until the next morning, when I immediately summoned a coroner's jury to inquire into the cause of Burns' death, who brought in the following verdict:

We, the undersigned, summoned by the marshal of Honolulu to hold an inquest upon the body of Henry Burns, seaman, and to decide upon the probable cause of his death, have all agreed after due reflection upon the statements of the witnesses produced, that Henry Burns' death was caused by a blow, inflicted with a club in the hands of constable George Sherman, on the evening of November 8th. We believe that the blow was not given with malice aforethought, but rather from cowardice in quelling the disturbance, which was the cause of his visit to the cell where Burns and others were confined.

Julius A. Anthon, foreman; John C. Bullions, James K. Turner, Thomas Spencer, C. S. Bartow, J. B. Cleveland, H. Smith, Benjamin Clough, A. C. Edwards.

Honolulu, November 9, 1852.  
While the jury was hearing the evidence, the news that Burns had been killed by a constable was spread among the sailors and caused a good deal of talk. Many of them assembled about the Fort, until there was quite a crowd. They demanded that Sherman should be given up to them; but I informed them that this could not be done; that the man would be tried by the courts of the country, and that they need not fear but that justice would be meted out to him. The sailors were not at all satisfied with this statement, and the excitement over Burns' death, together with their desire to avenge themselves on Sherman increased hourly. I plainly saw that this state of feeling and excitement among the sailors might lead to a serious disturbance, unless decisive action were immediately taken to disperse the crowd then and there. I therefore ordered all the soldiers and constables in the Fort under arms, picked out seventy-five of the best men with the purpose of going out and dispersing the crowd, thereby preventing any further opportunity of trouble. I was just on the point of marching out with my men, when I received an order from the government, through Governor Kekuanaoa, to remain within the Fort, but if the sailors attacked it or tried to break in the gates, I was to fire. The government was in hopes that the excitement would be quieted without any demonstration or resort to force; perhaps it was right in taking this view, but I believe if I had been allowed to carry out my intention, the trouble would have been checked in the bud. I remain disappointed in being obliged to remain inactive, but of course it was necessary to obey my orders. I therefore took measures to secure the Fort from attack; a strong guard was placed on duty, and two field-pieces loaded with grape and canister were trained on the gate, so that if the crowd had attempted to force it, I think they would not have gone very far into the Fort. The men hung around all day, but did not make any attack, as I think they had an idea that they would get the worst of it if they did so; some of their captains and officers, although they did not actually encourage the men in their acts, did not attempt to dissuade them. On the following day, in the afternoon, Burns was buried in Nuuanu Valley, a large number of the sailors attending.

On the same day, about 5 o'clock, a number of the sailors got the idea that some of their fellow-seamen who were in the United States Hospital—a building which stood just below the present British Club premises on Alakea street, under the charge of Mr. John Ladd—were being ill-treated. For some reason the sailors had a grudge against Mr. Ladd; they therefore set out for the hospital with the intention of rescuing their comrades and getting square with him. As there had been rumors of their coming, together with threats of personal injury to him, Mr. Ladd had taken what money and papers there were, and for safety, had gone up Nuuanu Valley to the residence of Mr. Severance, the American commissioner. When the sailors arrived at the hospital, they found their comrades well cared for, but no Mr. Ladd. During the early evening of that same day, however, there was a great deal of excitement, the sailors becoming more riotous in their conduct and threats, one of which was to fire the town; many were armed, and others made clubs from a couple of woodpeckers to which they helped themselves, and as they were virtually in possession of the town there was no telling what they might do. Mr. Severance now address-

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ed a part of the crowd from the balcony of the United States Consulate, on the corner of Nuuanu and Marine streets, while Mr. Allen, the American Consul, spoke to another part from the steps of what is now Mr. Roth's store on Fort street; this building then stood some six feet from the ground. Both gentlemen said that the constable would be tried by the process of law, and advised the men to disperse and return to their ships; but the sailors did not pay much attention to either, and the majority of those to whom Mr. Allen was speaking, left before he concluded, and went to the Fort. Here they again demanded that Sherman should be given up, but were refused; they hung around but did not offer to attack. While these were at the Fort, others went to the police station, near the foot of Nuuanu street; drove out what officers were there on duty, seized the arms stored there, and after breaking all the furniture, made a pile of it inside the building, set it on fire, and the wind being in the usual quarter—northeast—there would have been great danger of the entire fleet getting on fire. Had this happened, one of the greatest fires ever known here would have taken place, for moored as closely as the vessels were, and filled with oil, they would have burned for days. As it was, one ship that was near the buildings did take fire; but as soon as the sailors discovered this, realizing that the whole fleet was placed in danger, and with it all their catch of the season, they quickly set to work and put out the fire.

At this period of their course many of the better class of men among the crowd came to the conclusion that enough had been done, and that it was time to stop, especially as the whole fleet had come near burning up; these therefore took no further part in the disturbances. The remainder however were very much pleased and elated over what they had accomplished; they considered that they had had some revenge on the police, as the police station had been burned, and they were now ready for more mischief. They accordingly went up Nuuanu street, entered the first liquor saloon they came upon, drove the proprietors out, and helped themselves to the liquors; from there they went to the Commercial Hotel, and from that place to the French Hotel on Fort street, the same thing happening at these two latter places as at the former. The result was that by 11 o'clock all hands were decidedly drunk. A few were now seized with the idea of more revenge against the government; and as Dr. G. P. Judd was a prominent man in it, being at that time Minister of Finance, it was proposed to go up the valley to Dr. Judd's residence, "Sweet Home," and mob him. Some fifty men set out on this errand; but the road was long and dark, turning out to be longer than they thought, and some dropped out, so that by the time they reached their destination there were not many left. Dr. Judd had received word that the sailors were on their way; his family went to one of the neighbors for safety, while the doctor and a few others remained on the veranda; the sailors came as far as the gate, and after making threats as to what they would do, finally went away. I believe that at the same time these men went to Dr. Judd's, another set, on a like errand, started for Mr. Armstrong's residence, where the Punahou Preparatory School is. Mr. Armstrong was then Minister of Public Instruction, and the men had the same

feeling against him that they had against Dr. Judd; but for some reason they did not reach there. So the night passed. The following morning, the 11th, the sailors being still very violent in their threats, Mr. Severance again addressed them, but with no better success than before.

By this time, seeing that something decisive should be done, as the sailors had had possession of the town for twenty-four hours, during which time, as I have written, they had destroyed property, threatened people, and almost set the fleet on fire, I went to the Palace and told Kamehameha III that I wished to resign my office as marshal, as I was not allowed to take any steps to put down the riot. He refused to accept my resignation, saying at the same time, "What do you propose to do?" I replied, "If you will not consent to my using the soldiers in putting down this disturbance, then send for the Governor (Kekuanaoa), and order him to hold a meeting of the citizens at the Fort on the state of affairs." The Governor, being called in, thought it a good plan to hold such a meeting, so I returned to the Fort. Upon his arrival, a meeting of the foreign citizens was held at 11 o'clock, many of the captains and officers of the fleet being present. A military company was formed, with A. J. McDuffee, as captain; and with H. Macfarlane, A. B. Howe, R. A. S. Wood and Captain Hop, as lieutenants. At this stage of the proceedings the Governor was requested to proclaim martial law; but some persons thought he had no authority to do it. I then said, "We will take the authority, and let consequences take care of themselves," and calling the Governor into my office, I told Captain Crabbe to draw the order up, the Governor signed it, and in an hour I had it printed and posted all over town. Our arrangements being completed, the native militia, the foreign company, captains and officers from the fleet, left the Fort and marched up town. The sailors, who by this time were rather demoralized, offered no resistance to the show of force; only two of them showed any disposition to fight while the force was marching along Hotel street, but they were soon cared for. The result was that in a short time law and order were restored; some two hundred of the rioters were locked up in the Fort, and the remainder turned over to their respective captains, who took them off to their ships. It was 2 o'clock when we left the Fort, and by sundown not a sailor was to be found in the streets. The foreign military company patrolled the town; all sailors found were brought to the Fort, and all with sixty days permits found out of their lodging houses after dark were arrested. The following day, the 12th, an order was issued by the Governor to the effect that no seaman should be allowed on shore until further notice, the guard of foreigners carrying the order into effect. I was aware that the District Attorney thought we had no right to proclaim martial law or to issue the foregoing order; but the end would have justified the means, even if the means themselves had been less justifiable.

The day after this the Governor called at the Fort. I said to him, "If I had not been prevented from going out with the soldiers, the station house would not have been burned." "Yes," he answered, "but if you had, you might have killed and wounded some forty or fifty men; these we could not restore to life, but the station house we can build again." I thought, after all, that perhaps he was right. This order to keep the sailors aboard their ships was enforced for some weeks. The company of foreigners was called the Hawaiian Guards, and another company called the Hawaiian Cavalry was also formed at this time; both organizations were carried on for some years, and perhaps the former might be considered the ancestor of the present organization, the Honolulu Rifles. At the trial of those sailors who took active part in this riot, there were six out of the number convicted who had had smallpox, and in the great epidemic of the following year on this Island, they did a work for which no money could compensate them.

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